

BULGARIA

Key trends in 2023

- 🔍 Foreign Agents Registration Act, similar to Russia's NGO law, promoted by far-right parties
- 🔍 Restrictions on the right to protest for those showing solidarity with Palestine and for LGBTQI people.
- 🔍 The newly established Council for the Development of the Civil Society barely operational in 2023

Targeted recommendation:

- 🔍 Take urgent steps to ensure the regular and effective work of the Council for the Development of Civil Society (CDCS)



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Summary

Civic space is rated as narrowed in Bulgaria. There were no recommendations on civic space in the EU Commission's Rule of Law report 2023, although it noted concerns around a foreign agents law in 2023, the far-right Revival party resubmitted a Foreign Agents bill.

There were several concerning developments related to peaceful assembly, including, use of excessive force against protesters and banning of protests in particular against those expressing solidarity with Palestinian people. Civil society faced smear campaigns and Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation (SLAPPs). LGBTIQ+ and women's rights groups were especially targeted by attacks, usually carried out by far-right groups.

While the registration process of civil society organisations became easier, civic actors did not have adequate access to policy-making processes as the newly established Council for Civil Society Development was barely operational in 2023. Insufficient state funding resulted in civil society' dependence on EU and private funding, however the sector struggled to access EU funding.

